

Medicine Wheel / Paintrock Ranger District, Bighorn National Forest
Little Horn Watershed Allotments

Fisher Mountain C&H
Little Horn C&H
Red Springs C&H

Sage Basin C&H
Wyoming Gulch C&H

Criteria for Classification of Rangeland Suitability
11/20/2009

The following suitability criteria prepared by the Big 6 AMP revision ID team will be applied in site specific analysis of the above allotments.

“Suitable lands” for cattle are characterized by

- Livestock use the area under the existing management with current range improvements in place; indications are that desired conditions can be satisfactorily met, or
- Livestock will use the area under expected changes in patterns of use resulting from proposed changes in management and range improvements, and expectations are that desired conditions can be satisfactorily met.

“Not suitable” lands for cattle may be characterized by

- Unstable soils
- Steep topography (slopes of 41-60% may be Suitable for sheep but not normally for cattle)
- Natural barriers preventing access
- Highly erosive soils
- Areas with a large percentage of rock outcrop and rubbleland
- Boggy areas that livestock cannot use
- Vegetative cover insufficient to protect soil from erosion
- Inherently low potential for production (< 200 lb forage/acre)
- Range sites small in size and isolated from other capable land
- Lack of management improvements such as fences or water points
- Areas closed to grazing
- Areas where livestock grazing may not be economically feasible
- Areas where unacceptable unresolved conflicts occur with other uses
- Areas that currently have an overstory of tree canopy cover and/or unpalatable shrub canopy cover > 70%

Observations of actual livestock use patterns and impacts are considered in this analysis. Some areas may be found to be suitable, despite being characterized by one or more of the above “not suitable” criteria. Site specific criteria not listed above may result in a classification of “not suitable”. We also recognize that livestock may be present and may utilize forage in areas not mapped as suitable.

The approach to suitability in this project level analysis is, in general, consistent with the approach taken in the Forest Plan revision capability and suitability analysis. The primary differences are 1) in the level of detailed analysis and 2) specific on the ground knowledge versus modeling, both of which improve upon the larger and coarser scale Forest Plan analysis. Landscape level suitability determinations can be used as a starting point in a site specific assessment, but suitability determinations made at the site specific level supercede those made at a landscape level.

Approved

/s/ Dave Sisk

District Ranger Dave Sisk

3/8/2010

Date